

Joint Finance Committee Reduces Detrimental Cuts to Polluted Runoff Programs

Written by Clean Wisconsin
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JFC restores about \$3.5 million for staffing, grants for water pollution to soften the blow of Governor Walker's proposed \$6 million in cuts. Democrats had fought to restore full funding.

MADISON - The Joint Finance Committee softened the blow of Governor Walker's proposed \$6 million in cuts to polluted runoff prevention efforts by restoring almost \$3.5 million in both staffing and grants that deal with this pressing water pollution issue. Committee Republicans ultimately pushed to restore the \$3.5 million, and Democrats fought to restore full funding.

"It's encouraging to see our state legislators recognizing the acute problems caused largely by polluted runoff," says Amber Meyer Smith, director of government relations at Clean Wisconsin. "We appreciate those legislators on the Joint Finance Committee who pushed to restore this critical funding."

Some funding was restored for county conservation staff, the "boots on the ground" for helping farmers and landowners implement practices that help prevent polluted runoff and protect waterways. Some funding was also restored for various grant programs aimed at reducing runoff from farm fields and urban streets, as well as grants to improve flood control and mitigation.

"Everyone in Wisconsin wants clean water to drink and recreate," says Smith. "Water clarity has a huge impact on our tourism economy, but it also contributes to higher property values and fewer human health costs."

Polluted runoff is largely responsible for the recently discovered dead zone in Green Bay, contaminated drinking wells in Kewaunee County, and beach closings around the state every summer due to toxic blue-green algae.

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"Today's action was a step in the right direction, but more must be done in the future to help Wisconsin end the problems plaguing our waterways," says Smith. "Clean water needs to remain a priority for this legislature moving forward."

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Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and polluters accountable. On behalf of its 10,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners,

Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play. 608-251-7020, www.cleanwisconsin.org.